

METHOD AND APPARATUS PROVIDING AUTONOMOUS DISCOVERY OF  
POTENTIAL TRADING PARTNERS IN A DYNAMIC, DECENTRALIZED  
INFORMATION ECONOMY

ABSTRACT OF THE DISCLOSURE

A method and system for searching for software agents or directory service agents in a distributed environment. The system employs a plurality of host computers that include software agents and/or directory service agents and that are connected to a network. The method as invoked at one of the host computers searches for other agents with a recursive search that enables one agent to locate other agents that match a given criteria. The recursive search may use cross-listed directory services, negotiated cross-listings and economic considerations.